

Language can be conveniently classified as either literal or figurative. When we speak literally, we mean exactly what the meaning each word carries; when we use figurative language we mean something other than the actual meaning of the words. "Go jump in the lake," for example, if meant literally would be intended as a command to leave (go) and jump (not dive or wade) into a lake (not a pond or stream). Usually, however, such an expression is not literally meant. In telling someone to go jump in the lake we are telling them something, to be sure, but what we mean is different from the literal meaning of the words. We are actually telling them 'to get lost', which is itself a figurative expression.

Rhetoricians have catalogued more than 250 different figures of speech, expressions or ways of using words in a nonliteral sense. Two that are specially important for poetry are *simile* and *metaphor*.

The heart of both these figures is comparison the making of connections between normally unrelated things, seeing one thing in terms of another. More than 2,300 years ago Aristotle defined metaphor as "an intuitive perception of the similarity between different things." Also he suggested that to be a "master of metaphor" is the greatest achievement of a poet. In our century, Robert Frost has echoed Aristotle by suggesting that metaphor is central to poetry, and that, essentially, poetry is a way of "saying one thing and meaning another, saying one thing in terms of another."

Although both figures involve comparisons between unlike things, simile establishes the comparison explicitly with the words *like* or *as*. Metaphor, on the other hand, employs no such explicit verbal clue. The comparison is implied in such a way that the figurative term is substituted for or identified with the literal **one**.

"My daughter dances like an angel" is a simile; "my daughter is an angel" is a metaphor. The difference between the two involves more than the word *like*: the simile is more restricted in its comparative suggestion than **the other** is.

1. The passage is mainly about _____.

- a. the activities of rhetoricians
- b. the achievements of poets
- c. figurative language
- d. literal language

2. The word "**one**" in line 25 refers to _____.

- a. way
- b. comparison
- c. term
- d. verbal clue

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3. The word “**the other**” in line 28 refers to _____.
- angel
 - the metaphor
 - the simile
 - my daughter
4. Figurative language differs from literal language in that it is more _____.
- real
 - informal
 - predictable
 - indirect
5. Which of the following is NOT TRUE according to the text? Simile and metaphor are similar in that they _____.
- are both figures of speech
 - both involve comparison
 - both use the words like or as
 - are both important for poetry
6. Aristotle and Robert Frost both emphasize the _____.
- importance of metaphor
 - need to communicate
 - limitations of simile
 - need for qualified poets
7. According to the text, poets _____.
- prefer simile to metaphor
 - use the same similes in many poems
 - often write one thing but mean another
 - overuse metaphors in their poems

ANSWER KEY: 1C 2C 3B 4D 5C 6A 7C